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C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 000230

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CCA - GZAMBRANO AND WHA/CAR - JMITCHELL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/21/2019  
TAGS: [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [PREL](#)  
SUBJECT: TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO - LIBERTAD ACT REVIEW

REF: SECSTATE 48487

Classified By: Charge d'Affairs John Ries, reasons 1.4 (b/d)

(U) This message responds to reftel questions.

11. (C) QUESTION: Has the host country, in Post's opinion, worked to promote the advancement of democracy and human rights in Cuba?

ANSWER: Post is not aware of any GOTT initiatives promoting democracy and human rights in Cuba.

12. (C) QUESTION: Has the host country made public statements or undertaken other governmental actions, such as resolutions in the national assemblies condemning human rights abuses in Cuba; or actions in support of civil society in Cuba through host country's diplomatic missions or other fora?

ANSWER: The GOTT has made no public statements or undertaken any governmental action to condemn human rights abuses in Cuba or support civil society in Cuba.

13. (C) QUESTION: Have there been any high-level diplomatic visits between Cuba and the host country in the past six months?

ANSWER: Prime Minister Patrick Manning visited Cuba from December 4-8 to attend the triennial CARICOM/Cuba Summit. On the margins of the meeting, Manning and Raul Castro discussed health and education issues, focusing on medical cooperation and student exchange scholarships. During the visit Manning invited Raul Castro to visit Trinidad and Tobago and offered to host the Fourth CARICOM/Cuba Summit in Trinidad in 2011.

While attending the summit, Manning underwent medical examinations as part of routine follow-up care for his previous heart surgeries completed in Cuba. Doctors discovered a tumor on Manning's left kidney, which they subsequently removed during a December 17 return visit. Castro indicated that this surgery was a "gift" from the Cuban government, as there was an agreement between the two governments for such state-to-state arrangements. After recuperating in Cuba over the Christmas holiday, Manning returned to Trinidad. Doctors required that Manning return for quarterly medical check-ups; thus, Manning visited Cuba in March 2009 and is expected to see his doctors again in June.

14. (C) QUESTION: What is the nature of investments (and names, if known) that host country businesses have in Cuba?

ANSWER: Post is aware of no Trinidad & Tobago (T&T) private companies or individuals with significant presence or investments in Cuba; T&T's exports to Cuba consist primarily of bulk commodities (chemicals, iron and steel, fertilizer) which do not require producers to establish a presence in

Cuba.

15. (C) QUESTION: Are there any bilateral trade agreements or other cooperative agreements between host country and Cuba?

ANSWER: Trinidad & Tobago does not have a bilateral trade agreement with Cuba, but as a member of CARICOM, T&T has ratified the trade agreement between CARICOM and Cuba. In September 2007, T&T established a trade facilitation office in Havana to serve as a conduit between T&T manufacturers and Cuban state companies. The GOTT has concluded cooperative agreements with Cuba relating to the medical and agricultural exchange programs described in paragraph 7.

16. (C) QUESTION: Are there any exchange programs between host country and Cuba, including but not limited to: scholarships for host country nationals to study in Cuba; Cuban-paid medical travel for host country nationals; and Cuban doctors working in host country?

ANSWER: Twenty-two Cuban doctors and eighteen Cuban nurses arrived in Trinidad on May 18, 2007, to begin two-year contracts with the Ministry of Health, working at public health facilities. In a May 13, 2009 press conference, Minister of Health Jerry Narace indicated that the GOTT would turn to Cuba and the Philippines to assist with a current shortage of nurses in T&T, indicating that medical exchange with Cuba would be expanded to meet expanding needs in T&T.

In June 2008, a team of Cuban agricultural advisors began working on a 200-acre demonstration farm in Tucker Valley, Chaguaramas, in a joint venture between the GOTT and Cuba aimed at introducing Cuban organic farming techniques to T&T. The project's first harvest reached the local market by the beginning of December. In a Parliamentary session, GOTT officials heralded the success of the farm, stating the food prices should fall as more of the crop is harvested.

17. (C) Post believes it is in the U.S. national interest to suspend Title III of the Libertad Act for Trinidad and Tobago, based on its contribution to U.S. energy security as a reliable supplier of oil and gas and its importance as an economic, political, and security leader in the eastern Caribbean.  
Ries